DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 127 513 CG 010 740

AUTHOR Malcolm, David D.; And Others
TITLE The Community Based Block: An Alternative Approach in Counselor Education.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the California Personnel and Guidance Association (San Diego, California, February, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Counselor Certification; *Counselor Training; *Cultural Awareness; Culturally Disadvantaged; *Curriculum Design; *Demonstration Projects; *Disadvantaged Youth; *Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; Outreach Programs; Program Descriptions; Speeches; Student Centered Curriculum

ABSTRACT

This article describes the community-based block program in the Department of Counselor Education at San Diego State University. This program allows counselor trainees to work with disadvantaged youth in schools and other community agencies. The emphasis of this program is on the development of skills counselors can use with minority students while concurrently fulfilling certification requirements. Students and faculty are selected according to interest and cultural background for the two-semester project. Students spend 12-16 hours per week as community interns and six to eight additional hours in practicum supervision and critique. The program attempts to provide experiences in: (1) building a learning community, (2) responding to real life needs, (3) understanding the pluralism of society, (4) using a diversity of learning methods, and (5) giving continuous feedback as to the success of the project. There is little systematic evaluation of the program, but its strengths are identified as the emphasis on cultural pluralism, the curricular flexibility, the emphasis on the practical and the experiential, and the opportunities for students to assume responsibility for their own training. (HLM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED127513

THE COMMUNITY-BASED BLOCK: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

BY

Dr. David D. Malcolm,
Dr. Raymond Howard,
Dr. Guy Trujillo
Counselor Education Department
San Diego State University
San Diego, CA 92182

CG 010 740

For some years the Department of Counselor Education at San Diego State University has been making extensive efforts to recruit minority students and faculty, to promote greater awareness of the values of cultural pluralism, and to develop a curriculum which would be more responsive to the needs of people of color. The culmination of these efforts has been the development of a multi-cultural community-based block program for a limited number of full-time graduate students. This program, currently (1975-76) in its third year, is not designed to replace the existing program but to provide an alternative to it, an alternative hopefully particularly appropriate for those whose special interest is to work with inner city populations and in multi-cultural settings. The purpose of this article is to present a brief description of the operation of and rationale for this alternative approach in counselor education.

The community-based block program. The community-based block program is a special program within the Department of Counselor Education which focusses on counseling out-of-school youth, irregular school attenders, and unemployed and underemployed young adults. Participation in the program does not, of course, commit any student to seek employment serving these populations but most of the training is conducted within a social/cultural context with heavy emphasis on minority concerns and inner-city field placements. The program is designed both for students who intend to seek employment in a public school setting and for those who do not.

The community-based block program is meant to be community-based in two senses of the word "community." The program is itself designed to be a "community"--an intact group of twenty-four students and three

core faculty members committed to learning and experiencing together. The word "community" is also used to refer to the locale of the program and to its involvement with its special target populations--inner-city residents, people of color, unemployed and underemployed youth, poor people in general, and the schools and other agencies which serve them.

Objectives. The objectives of the program are basically the same as those for other counselor education programs. The difference is a difference in emphasis rather than in kind. Traditionally, the skills of the counselor for the most part have been skills developed by whites for use with whites, skills ordinarily most frequently and successfully used by persons who tend to be young, attractive, verbal, intelligent, and successful. It is the special emphasis of this program to reexamine these skills and to modify or discard them as necessary to make them appropriate and effective for counseling with other populations. The initial objective is to develop the same counselor skills that other counselor education programs seek to develop; the difference is that whereas other departmental programs then go on to attempt to hone these skills to a high degree of mastery, this program seeks to adapt them to fit the needs of a different population.

Since a substantial number of students in the program plan to seek employment in a public school setting, the program is designed to include the specific objectives determined in advance by departmental policy as required for credentialling purposes. Other course objectives are less specific, less clearly delineated in advance, and emerge as the semester goes on and become specific in response to individual student needs and to concerns confronting students in community-based field placements.

Student Selection. Student selection is a critical issue in the community-based block program. This program utilizes a "block" format which means that students admitted to the program form a self-contained unit which becomes in effect a total learning community. All students admitted to the "block" enroll in all of the courses offered in the block, and no others, for two semesters. Students spend a very large part of their time together in both formal and informal activities. To insure that the group itself is at least somewhat representative of the special target population it is designed to serve, the selection process is deliberately skewed to insure that at least two-thirds of those admitted are people of color. Twenty-four students are admitted annually. Typically, the group will be approximately 1/3 Anglo, 1/3 Black, and 1/3 Chicano. To the extent possible, the program admits approximately an equal number of women and men.

Justification for this unusual selection process lies in the nature of the program itself. As the core of its instructional program, the community-based block program strives to achieve the creation of a learning community in which students and faculty join in common enterprise, learning from each other and learning together with emphasis on the personal and the affective as well as on the professional and the cognitive. In a sense, the program becomes a microcosm of the cultural pluralism of the larger society in which students and faculty deal with their own racism and sexism, sometimes in mixed and sometimes in homogeneous groupings. Thus, the student composition of the program is central to the instructional methodology and therefore the student selection process is of necessity designed to give primary consideration

to selection of students who each bring some unique contribution to the learning community.

Faculty Background. Like student selection, faculty selection is a critical aspect of the community-based block program. In the first place, faculty, like students, must have a special interest in and commitment to the community-based emphasis which permeates the program and be temperamentally willing and ready to give students personal access to themselves in the deeply intimate intense, and time-and-energy consuming interpersonal encounters in which all, students and faculty alike, must participate. A second critical consideration is that the faculty as a group, again like the students, be representative of the cultural pluralism of the larger society. For 1975-76, the core faculty were Dr. Ray Howard (Black), Dr. David Malcolm (Anglo), and Dr. Guy Trujillo (Chicano).

Faculty assignment (as differentiated from "selection") to the community-based block program also involves special important consideration unique to this program. The intensity of involvement that is central to the success of the program requires that core faculty members be assigned not less than 50% to 75% time. Faculty members assigned lesser amounts of time simply are not sufficiently available to students and do not have enough flexibility of schedule to participate fully. As so often is the case, the gain here is a matter of trade-offs; the gain that comes to the program from deeper and more intense and intimate faculty involvement is accompanied by loss in terms of exposure of students to only a relatively small number of the members of the department. The program attempts to compensate for this to some extent

by scheduling other faculty members for individual presentations in their areas of special expertise and by extending invitations to them to visit or participate in block activities.

As of this time (1975-76), two glaring deficiencies in faculty staffing still exist. The first and most obvious deficiency lies in the fact that all of the core faculty members are males. In a program which gives the emphasis this program does to the twin concerns of racism and sexism, lack of female faculty input becomes an especially serious deficiency. A second deficiency is that the program is understaffed. Practicum size is too large--currently three practicum sections are scheduled with eight students each whereas four sections of six students should be maximum. The limited number of faculty hours available for on-site supervision of community field placements make it difficult to provide the degree of integration of course content with field-generated needs that is intended in the program design.

Special Features. An important aspect of the community-based block program is its flexibility. Since all of the courses offered in the block are limited to and required of all block students, at any time in response to pressing needs, it is possible to increase the weekly time allotted to any particular course or even temporarily to interrupt all courses and devote full attention to some special topic or special concern. In addition, not all courses are conducted like regular, formal, on-campus courses. Much of what ordinarily might be presented in regular campus classes is covered by workshops, seminars, demonstrations, or mini-courses which, to as great extent as possible, deal with content generated by problems confronted by students in their field placements. This flexibility permits the program to accomodate

instruction to both pre-determined and emergent objectives. In addition it provides a setting in which, hopefully, students can themselves become responsible for large blocks of their time and substantial amounts of their own learning rather than being primarily dependent upon and accountable to faculty.

The community-based block program is designed to be more than merely a sum of its courses. Of at least equal importance are certain less tangible experiential outcomes which it is hoped will result from the integration of all courses and student activities in the block format into a total unified student program. The nature of these experiential outcomes or objectives is indicated in the list which follows:

1) The program attempts to give each student the experience of participating in the building of a "learning community" wherein every member contributes according to his or her level of experience and wherein every member's contribution is valued.

2) The program attempts to give each student the experience of learning which is triggered by the interaction between block members and their field placements, learning which is triggered by real life needs rather than based on a prior set of assignments.

3) The program attempts to give each student the experience of participating in a learning community in which learnings are pluralistic, even idiosyncratic, with learning coming not from every learner doing the same thing at the same time but from opportunity for exposure to a rich diversity of associates.

4) The program attempts to give each student the experience of making use of a wide diversity of learning modes--reading, observing, participating in field experiences, simulation, demonstrations, writing, taping and critiquing, direct experiencing, viewing video tapes; each student, hopefully, becomes able to select from this vast array those best suited to his purposes and most congenial to his learning style.

5) The program attempts to give each student the experience of a process of student evaluation which consists primarily on ongoing, supportive feedback which identifies successes at incremental levels rather than relying totally or almost totally on the occasional imposition of conventional "marks" or "grades."

Community Involvement. As its name clearly implies, community involvement is the very essence of the community-based block program. Students spend twelve to sixteen hours per week (three to four half days) each semester in internship placements located for the most part in settings in southeast San Diego in which they work primarily with irregular school attenders, out-of-school youth, and unemployed or under-employed young adults. Students spend an additional six to eight hours weekly in practicum under close supervision and direct critiquing of their counseling with clients who are drawn, to the extent feasible, from these same community internship placements.

Ordinarily, internship placements are either in public schools and school-sponsored projects or in non-school community agencies which serve the geographical area and target population. In the near future, part of this community-based experience for students may be centered in the facilities of a Personnel Development Center currently under development which will be located in a bungalow on the campus of Memorial Junior High School in southeast San Diego. Once the facilities of this Personnel Development Center become available, the community-based block program hopes to develop and operate an outreach/counseling/follow-up service center of its own for southeast area residents.

Summary. To date, little systematic evaluation of the program has been undertaken. Information available so far is largely limited to reactions and opinions of students and graduates. What data there are seem to lend strong encouragement for continued support for the program. Graduates comment freely and favorably on the personal and professional

growth they experienced and report themselves competent and confident as counselors on the job. The characteristics of the program most consistently singled out for praise are: (1) the emphasis on cultural pluralism, (2) the curricular flexibility, (3) the emphasis on the practical and the experiential, and (4) the opportunities for students to assume responsibility for their own learnings. As the program continues in future years it will continue to be modified in an effort to capitalize even more fully on these particular strengths.